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Transmitted via Email

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MINNESOTA BULLETIN NO. 190-5-14

SUBJECT: ECS - CTA – PRESCRIBED BURNING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.

Purpose. To inform NRCS employees of MN policy regarding prescribed burning technical assistance.

Expiration date. September 30, 2005.

Minnesota Policy

Technical assistance policy for prescribed burning can be found in MN Amendment 1 of the National Range and Pasture Handbook. A summary of Minnesota NRCS policy is as follows:

- Safety will be the first consideration in prescribed burning.
- Only trained and qualified NRCS personnel with the appropriate job approval authority are authorized to provide assistance in planning or developing the prescribed burn plan according to standard Prescribed Burning (338).
- When NRCS or private vendors are involved in making specific prescribed burning recommendations, a detailed burn plan will be required in accordance with practice standard Prescribed Burning (338) and associated Statement of Work (SOW).
- NRCS staff with proper approval authority may review prescribed burn plans prepared by others if requested to do so.
- The landowner or operator must be informed in writing of possible liability for damages if the fire escapes, smoke damage occurs, or of the potential for accidents caused by poor visibility.
- NRCS will not participate in the prescribed burn.

NRCS Prescribed Burning Technical Approval Authority (TAA) Classification

Minnesota NRCS has two levels of TAA classification for prescribed burning. They are:

- **Level I** - NRCS employee may develop a conservation plan recommending the Prescribed Burning (338) practice when appropriate.
- **Level II** - NRCS employee may at their discretion, develop a Class Ia prescribed burn plan (<100 acres of non-volatile herbaceous and/or woody species) per practice standard 338, or review Class Ia-Ic burn plans (<640 acres non-volatile herbaceous vegetation) developed by others for consistency with practice standard Prescribed Burning (338) and associated Statement of Work (SOW).

Training Requirements

To obtain Level I TAA, an NRCS employee must have received NRCS prescribed burning awareness training or its equivalent that covers the benefits of prescribed burning and how it is used as a resource management tool as per standard 338. Awareness training can be achieved through a self-paced PowerPoint or video tape.

Level I training will enable the NRCS employee to use prescribed burning as a conservation management tool for inclusion in a conservation plan. Anyone developing conservation plans recommending prescribed burning must be trained to this level.

To obtain a Level II TAA, an NRCS employee must receive formal NRCS prescribed burning training or its equivalent, which includes how to develop a burn plan that meets practice standard Prescribed Burning (338). In addition to classroom training, LEVEL II TAA requires a concurrent field training burn.

The appropriate field support office will determine TAA for prescribed burns during field evaluations with individual NRCS employees. A TAA approval list will be maintained in the NRCS Field Support Office.

The NRCS State Office will be developing a process to recognize qualified partner employees with Level II TAA. Until that process is put into place, Level II TAA will be restricted to NRCS employees.

Technical Assistance

There has been some confusion regarding Technical Service Providers (TSP) and eligibility for technical assistance obligations.

- When technical assistance (TA) dollars are included in an approved conservation program contract, the landowner selected TSP must be certified on USDA TechReg for work in Minnesota.
- If there are no technical assistance (TA) dollars obligated in the contract, the landowner selected TSP is not required to be certified on TechReg. However, implementation of the practice must follow the steps outlined in the Technical Assistance policy below.

It is Minnesota NRCS policy that any planner that recommends the prescribed burning practice in a conservation plan must have Level I TAA as outlined earlier. It is our goal to assemble a cadre of NRCS staff in each administrative area with Level II TAA. These staff will be able to assist landowners who elect not to seek assistance from private vendors. It will take time to get these staff to the proper TAA level. Therefore, until we have sufficient staff at these levels, the following technical assistance procedures will be followed:

Technical Service Providers (TSP) certified on Tech Reg for the 338 practice.

1. Conservation plan will utilize the most recent Toolkit 338 narrative.
2. TSP will develop a burn plan and certify the practice meets NRCS standards and specifications.
3. NRCS District Conservationist will certify the practice complete for cost share with adequate documentation.

Federal or State Agencies, Rural Fire Departments, Non-Governmental Organizations and Vendors not certified on USDA Tech Reg. who have staff certified by their entity to develop a burn plan and carry out a prescribed burn.

1. Conservation plan will utilize the most recent Toolkit 338 narrative.
2. NRCS Designated Conservationist will review the burn plan for consistency with the practice Statement of Work – Design requirements.
3. NRCS District Conservationist will certify the practice complete for cost share with adequate documentation.

Private Landowners.

1. Conservation plan will utilize the most recent Toolkit 338 narrative.
2. Landowner must provide NRCS a copy of their valid DNR Open Burning Permit prior to initiating the practice.
3. NRCS District Conservationist with proper TAA or holds a current Certified Conservation Planner certification will certify the practice complete for cost share with adequate documentation.

Direct any questions to Paul Flynn, State Resource Conservationist.

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